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The American Institute of Sacred Literature

SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS OF BIBLE CLUBS USING THE OUTLINE COURSES

In presenting the final group of suggestions to leaders of classes the INSTITUTE desires to announce that all the suggestions which have appeared in these pages since October first will be reprinted and can be secured after July first by all who desire to lead classes in either THE SOCIAL AND ETHICAL TEACHING OF JESUS or THE ORIGIN AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS. Meanwhile subscriptions to the BIBLICAL WORLD may be dated back so as to cover the preceding studies as long as the supply lasts. Commencing with October, 1912, suggestions for class work in further outline courses will be presented.

THE SOCIAL AND ETHICAL TEACHING OF JESUS¹

The spirit of Jesus was never inactive. Where it lived it grew. It was like the mustard seed which was distended to become a great tree and the little leaven which must inevitably leaven the whole lump. The spirit of Jesus in human life today is equally dynamic. If left to itself in the individual many good and useful things may be accomplished for the good of humanity. But this is an age in which we are learning that the greatest strength lies in combined effort, the co-operation of the followers of Jesus. An intelligent study of the conditions and needs of society and a continuous effort to establish in a community the principles upon which his ideas were based is the true evangelism.

The time of the class has for nine months been devoted to a rapid study of the principles of Jesus. It is now time to survey these principles as a whole and to set them to work in the church and community to which the class belongs. The work of the two meetings of the month should be wholly constructive. The first may deal with the local community and may discuss: (1) Appropriate ways of training the children, young people, and adults of the community to appreciate such of their religious ideals as measure up to the standards of Jesus. (2) Plans for

¹ A course book may be secured from the American Institute of Sacred Literature—*The Social and Ethical Teaching of Jesus*, by Shailer Mathews. 50 cents, postage 4 cents.

rendering the church more effective in its ministry to the homes of the community. (3) Plans for bringing the Christian spirit into the administration and life of the various institutions of the community. (4) Plans for establishing the connection between the ideals of Jesus and the best interests of the community. (5) Plans for promoting democratic Christian fellowship between all classes in the community.

The second meeting may deal with the state and the duties of the Christian citizen in relation to the great questions which confront the nation. Not what Jesus said in detail, but the principles which his words and acts represented are the basis for taking a position on such questions as prohibition, temperance, gambling, different forms of recreation, immigration, the spread of disease, socialism, combinations of labor or of capital, the franchise, the observance of Sunday, and many other topics which will occur to the leader of the class.

It is possible that in some classes the members may not be prepared to discuss the larger questions. In such classes it will be well for the leader to make selections from the practical questions connected with modern life which are found under Study IX in the textbook. He may even, if it seems best, devote the period to discussing the review questions and help the class to arrive at a composite answer for each question. In such case it would be well to devote the first meeting to the discussion of the questions of the first three topics which deal with the individual, his relation to God and to his immediate environment, leaving the last three topics which deal with man's larger relationships, social, economic, and political for the second meeting. The full benefit of the work of this class will not be realized unless it results in a permanent organization of the members for active work in the social uplift of their community. It is the hope of the author of these suggestions that much useful work may be done within the next year by such groups as these.

THE ORIGIN AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS¹

The task for the present month is large. If it is well done it should arouse an attitude of interest and a desire to study more deeply the work of the poets and sages of the Hebrews. It should also give to the members of the class a method by which they can successfully make a more thorough study of the several books under consideration.

The common use of the Psalter in public and private worship has

¹ A coursebook may be secured from the American Institute of Sacred Literature—*The Origin and Religious Teaching of the Old Testament Books*, by Georgia L. Chamberlin. 50 cents, postage 4 cents.

rendered portions of its contents familiar, but a previous examination of the members of the class will reveal no extended knowledge. Familiarity is confined to a very limited number of psalms and the full significance of the religious thought and feeling in even these is not appreciated. Still less does the average person comprehend the nature, history, and contents of the Book of the Proverbs, or of the great religious purpose of such books as Job, the Song of Songs, or Ecclesiastes. It will be well, therefore, to assign the different sections from 210 to 237 to individuals in the class rather than to expect each member to cover all the sections.

A program for the first meeting may be: (1) The song book of the Hebrew people; the characteristics of its poetry; the mechanical arrangement of the book and the themes of its songs. (2) The reading of a psalm or portions of a psalm from each of the following groups: historical, penitential, thanksgiving, praise, imprecation. (3) The origin of national songs among all people, and an attempt to relate one or more of the national songs of the Hebrews to a definite historical occasion. (4) The "sayings" of the Hebrew people, their origin and transmission. (5) The themes around which the Proverbs may be grouped, with striking examples from each group.

Subject for discussion.—Through a comparison of modern proverbs in more or less common use, with the Hebrew proverbs trace resemblances and discuss the influence which proverbs have in the life of a people.

The Book of Job is so all-absorbing in its problem and so interesting in its dramatic intensity and exalted poetical form that it seems best to give one meeting to the consideration of this book alone. A series of topics such as follow may be: (1) The problem of the nation—why do the righteous suffer? and Job's problem—why do I suffer? (2) Very briefly in paraphrase and not by quotation: (a) the theory of Eliphaz concerning suffering; (b) the theory of Bildad; (c) the theory of Zophar; (d) Job's presentation of his case in answer to each of the above. (4) Job's soliloquy in regard to his relation to Jehovah. (5) The answer of Jehovah. (6) The literary beauty of the Book of Job illustrated by the reading of selections.

Subject for discussion.—Was Job's problem really solved? Have we a solution of the problem of the suffering of the righteous?

We have still remaining for the consideration of the class three books, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, and Daniel. There should also doubtless be some time taken for a general résumé of the course in a

simple statement of the history and nature of the Hebrew literature, and a consideration in the case of each book of the religious teaching which remains to us as a permanent element in Christianity. We leave to the leader the arrangement of the program of the last meeting, believing that he will leave his class with a strong impression that no books in the sacred collection are there merely because of literary value, but that each related itself to life-problems—the life-problems of a most deeply religious people from whom we have inherited traditions and principles which are fundamental in the Christian religion.

REFERENCE READING

Kent, *The Wise Men of Ancient Israel and Their Sayings*; Toy, *Book of Proverbs*; Peake, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament*; Cheyne, *Job and Solomon*; Genung, *The Epic of the Inner Life*; Murray, *The Origin and Growth of the Hebrew Psalter*; Perrowne, *The Psalms*; Edersheim, *The Temple and Its Ministry*; Davison, *Praises of Israel*; Daland, *The Song of Songs*; Griffis, *A Lily among Thorns*. The *Cambridge Bible*; the *Bible for Home and School*, the *Modern Readers' Bible*, the *Century Bible*, all contain volumes which will assist.

In the *Hastings Bible Dictionary*, both the four- and the one-volume editions, will be found articles of value under the names of the individual books.